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# MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, VA., Jan. 25, 1864.

*To the House of Representatives :*

In response to your resolution of the 11th ult., I herewith transmit a communication from the Secretary of War, showing, as far as the records of the Department enable him to do, the number of men liable to conscription who have been removed from the Commissary and Quartermaster's Departments, to give place to disabled soldiers, as directed by law.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
War Department, }  
Richmond, Va., Jan. 23, 1864. }

*To the President of the Confederate States :*

SIR: I have received the following resolution of the House of Representatives, referred by your Excellency to this Department:

*Resolved*, That the President be requested to inform this House what number of men liable to conscription have been removed from the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments, and their places filled by disabled soldiers, in pursuance of an order issued by the Adjutant General, to carry into effect a law on this subject, passed by the Congress of the Confederate States."

The reports of the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Commissary General, and Superintendent of Conscription, herewith transmitted, convey all the information in the possession of this Department, and set forth the reasons which render it impossible to respond more satisfactorily to the resolution of the House.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

C. S. WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Adjutant and Inspector General's Office,* }  
 Richmond, Va., Jan. 22, 1864.

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War, Richmond, Va.:*

SIR: The information desired by the resolution of the House of Representatives, in relation to the number of able-bodied soldiers employed in the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments, who have been sent to the field, under the operation of the act of Congress, approved April 22, 1863, cannot be furnished as fully as the resolution contemplates. But it will appear from the general orders in which the act is published to the army, (a copy of which is now furnished,) that the Department has endeavored to enforce the provisions of the law. It may be confidently asserted, that, except in special cases, and under the immediate sanction of the Secretary of War, no employee reported by post quartermasters or commissaries has been retained in either of the departments specified, unless disability for field service was clearly shown, in the manner prescribed in the general orders. It has been the invariable rule of this office, when such disability was not shown, to order the employee, if a soldier, to the field, and if a conscript, to direct the Bureau of Conscription to conscribe and assign him to a company in the army. These orders were made by endorsement upon the reports, which were referred either to the officer reporting, or to the Bureau of Conscription, as the facts indicated to be proper.

It would have been impossible, without greatly increased clerical assistance in this office, to register the names of employees in those departments; and, as the law did not require a report of their number to be made to Congress, this was not considered necessary for its enforcement.

No similar reports were required of commanding generals, because it was considered they would permit no able-bodied soldier in the field to remain, in violation of the law and orders, as an employee in either of the departments.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

S. COOPER,  
*Adjutant and Inspector General.*

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
 Richmond, January 14, 1863. }

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War, Richmond, Va.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 12th of December, 1863, requesting the "President to inform the House what number of men liable to conscription, have been removed from the Quartermaster and Commissary's Departments, and their places filled by disabled soldiers, in pursuance of an order issued by the Adjutant General, to carry into effect a law on this subject, passed by the Congress of the Confederate States." The order alluded to in the resolution, is supposed to be general order No. 105, dated July, 1863; and the law that of April 20th, 1863, respecting clerks in the Quartermaster and Commissary's Departments.

The resolution, so far as regards quartermasters, cannot be answered by this office, because:

1st. The said order requires reports to be made *through this office only, by officers at posts*. Officers in the field, who constitute at least three-fourths of the whole, are required to report to their commanding general, who, it is supposed, transmits such reports directly to the Adjutant and Inspector General's Department.

2nd. With regard to officers at posts, it can be said, that of the twelve hundred and forty (1240) quartermasters and assistant quartermasters, in the service, only three hundred and ninety-five (395) are serving at posts. Of these one hundred and twenty-one have rendered reports, under said orders; these reports have all been sent promptly to the Adjutant and Inspector General's Department, for his actions and orders. As to the military status of these clerks, I am not advised; the action taken by that officer, if any, has not been communicated to this office, but is presumed to have been sent directly to the proper enrolling officer, for execution.

The order of the War Department, in question, and the law of April 20th, 1863, on which it is based, appears to have been regularly executed, so far as the reports have been received from officers; as urgent appeals from many of them, for the detention of efficient and experienced clerks have been denied, when the parties were liable to military duty.

Officers at posts, who have not yet rendered the reports required, have been again called on to do so, and proper efforts are being made to secure them from all. It may be remarked, as one cause of delay, that a number of these officers are in the trans-Mississippi department, with whom, communication is slow and difficult.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. R. LAWTON,  
 Quartermaster General, C. S. A.

RICHMOND, VA., Dec. 15, 1863.

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War* :

SIR: The following resolution, adopted by Congress and referred by you on the 14th inst., was duly received:

“*Resolved*, That the President be requested to inform this House what number of men, liable to conscription, have been removed from the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments, and their places filled by disabled soldiers, in pursuance of an order issued by the Adjutant General to carry into effect a law on this subject, passed by the Congress of the Confederate States.”

I would respectfully reply that as soon as the order of the Adjutant General was received, it was distributed to the commissaries throughout the Confederacy, and although often petitioned by these officers in different parts of the country to allow them to retain certain of these clerks who had rendered invaluable service in their offices, an invariable answer in the negative has been returned, and the commissaries instructed to employ disabled soldiers and non-conscripts for the duty.

So far as this bureau proper is concerned, no clerks have been appointed in it since the passage of the first act of conscription, excepting those men who had been discharged from the service of the Confederate States army, or who were detailed on account of physical disability from such service. Previous to the passage of that act, verbal application had, from time to time, been made to the Secretary of War for additional force in the bureau. I entered the office on 1st April, 1861, with one clerk; on the 26th April, an additional clerk was allowed. By act of Congress, two more were allowed in August, 1861. These continued to transact the current work of the office until November, when, in consequence of the great increase of business, verbal application was made for several others; only one was allowed until March, 1862, when authority was given me to employ two others. On the 9th October, 1862, application was again made to the Secretary of War, by letter, for twelve additional clerks, which was approved by him.

The accounts of the office continued to accumulate. On the 20th January, 1863, another increase of ten clerks was applied for and granted. The conscription act had been passed, and the construction put upon it was that, after the 16th April, 1862, no clerk could be appointed who was subject to conscription at the time of the passage of the act. The appointments, being restricted, were made from that class of citizens who had been in and were, at the time of appointment, discharged from the service of the Confederate States army.

In consequence of this limitation the parties appointed lost so much time from sickness and wounds, that the business of the office, which had been continually on the increase, was necessarily thrown behind hand. Besides the loss of time from sickness, interrogatories from Congress had to be answered, which consumed the time of most of the clerks for several weeks. To overcome these difficulties I was under the

necessity recommending to you a further increase of clerical force on the 17th October, 1863. When the latter application was recommended it was a known fact that but few efficient wounded men and non-conscripts could be obtained on account of the low rate of compensation allowed the employees of the Government, and the impossibility of obtaining requisite board and lodging by them; and several of the most efficient that had been appointed have, during the present year, resigned their positions and returned to the army, or sought more lucrative employment elsewhere. Again, the clerks had been enrolled for local defence, and the number of raids made by the enemy in the vicinity of Richmond had caused a suspension of business in the department for a week at a time. It was, therefore, desirable that as many men as possible should be untrammelled for the local defence of the country. To meet these necessities and, at the same time, to aid the refugee and destitute portions of the female population of the country in part, and to give employment to many intelligent ladies of this class, the suggestion had been made, and by you approved and recommended, to test the qualifications of the ladies in the examination of the accounts of this bureau. The experiment has been tried, and is likely to prove successful, though the question is not yet beyond doubt.

With regard to the number of men liable to conscription, who have been removed from this department, this information can best be obtained from the bureau of conscription, the officers of which were authorized by the Adjutant General's orders to conscribe all who were efficient for field service.

I have been thus explicit to show that, so far as it lay in the power of this bureau, the object desired has been sedulously aimed at.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. B. NORTHOP,  
*Commissary General.*

Official copy :

L. B. NORTHOP, *Commissary General.*

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